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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000626

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: FOLLOW-UP READOUT ON AK PARTY CHAIRMAN
ERDOGAN'S VIEWS

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson; reasons: 1.5 (b,d).

[11.](#) (C) In Jan. 20 follow-up to Jan. 19 Ambassador-AK leader Erdogan meeting, Erdogan foreign policy advisor Bagis told us:

--Erdogan understood Ambassador's message that it's up to him (Erdogan) to make the case on Iraq to the Turkish public and parliament.

--One factor holding Erdogan back from more active commitment to get parliament and public on board is his skepticism at U.S. evidence. Dec. 10 briefing Erdogan received in Washington didn't convince him, given that it lacked hard, current information on Iraq's WMD stocks and production capacity. Erdogan is telling his advisors he needs better evidence regarding current threat and extent of Saddam's stocks and production capacity. Bagis asked whether the USG could provide a more detailed briefing with current information.

--Erdogan is also disconcerted by what he perceived to be too cautious an answer from President Bush at their Dec. 10 White House meeting in response to Erdogan's question how the U.S. would defend Turkey if attacked by Saddam. Erdogan asks whether the U.S. is in position to offer protection, e.g., large-scale supplies of gas masks?

--As a follow on to Erdogan's complaint that all the U.S. talks about is mitigation of operation-related economic damages and his desire that we discuss the benefits to Turkey from an operation, Bagis asked whether we can be more concrete regarding commercial and financial benefits accruing to Turkey from a regime change.

--Erdogan was dismayed that we had not more forcefully disassociated the Embassy/USG from Ambassador's immediate predecessor's public remarks in Turkey critical of Turkey's delay on Iraq decision-making. We reiterated that there has been some frustration with lack of Turkish decisions but noted that the Embassy had issued a statement underscoring categorically that the former ambassador does not represent the USG, and asked Bagis to relay this to Erdogan. (Note: we have heard similar expressions of concern at these remarks from other AK party officials. End note.)

--AK party and government want us to understand that the Turkish General Staff is not being as straightforward on Iraq as it tells us it is. "TGS has set a trap for AK, putting itself in a win-win situation," he concluded with resignation and frustration.

[12.](#) (C) Bagis doesn't know whether Erdogan will run in repeat of general elections in Siirt province. Bagis has family ties in Siirt and considers the people from Siirt to be a treacherous lot, still run by the feudal landlords whose only criterion is payoffs, which Erdogan isn't willing to indulge in. However, asking all three deputies from Rize to resign to arrange by-election there would be awkward for Tayyip, who never wants to say no to anyone or cross them. Bagis estimated that if Erdogan does run in Siirt on March 9, it will take up to mid-April to become P.M., given built-in procedural delays.

PEARSON